

SETAREH

Hidden Among Days

Masha Kovtun

7 MARCH 2026 – 17 APRIL 2026

SETAREH is excited to announce *Hidden Among Days*, a solo exhibition by Ukrainian artist Masha Kovtun, who lives and works in Prague, Czech Republic. *Hidden Among Days* continues Masha Kovtun's exploration of displacement, positioning her within a vital contemporary discourse. Kovtun investigates, with emphasis on the mutual understanding of nostalgia and melancholy, the search for one's own identity, determined by the specificity of the situation of an immigrant living in Prague. Her work relates to the theme of home in the broadest sense of the word. In a world that is reeling with the endless flow of a present becoming rapidly obsolete, home comes at a loss of intimacy and security. Through these paintings, she captures the rhythms of everyday life and the emotions that shape our sense of belonging, making the fleeting visible and deeply felt.

Hidden Among Days features works where setting, figure, character, and picture brilliantly meet to produce images that are on the verge between reality and imagination, remembrance and continuity. The many sides of hope are evoked. For one, how hope can offer brightness and warmth against uncertainty. But also, how hope can dim and fluctuate against turning tides. There is a veil of haziness present in Kovtun's paintings. Changing states of being are made visible through a contrast in lighting or in the clarity of specific details. Sometimes, the warm glow of a light is inverted by a drowning darkness, conjuring an atmosphere of constant discovery and shifting moods.

Masha Kovtun's works never leave reality, being grounded in how their figures and environments relate to each other. In *Theatre of the war* (2022), the undeniable shadow cast by a bird in flight is mirrored by a helicopter suspended in the sky in *Podbaba* (2023). Even in Kovtun's compositions that suggest wistfulness and reverie, reality is there past the thin veil. In *The sound of falling stars* (2023), a cracked door allows light to shine on a grouping of yellow flowers. Slightly blurred, there is just enough visibility to make out the flower heads, seeming to be right at home in the dust of an empty place, despite the question of their presence in an indoor room.

The effect of otherwise dark spaces being staged with deliberate light sources creates an obstacle for a certainty to form about the exact circumstances and happenings. Similarly, the usage of windows by Kovtun demonstrates more of the compositional deliberateness of these works. Windows as a framing device act as a barrier, keeping inner and outer worlds apart, united only by atmosphere and luminescence. However, this convention also binds Kovtun's settings to a fixed and stable ground, adding another layer as to how these works are more reality-making than reality-bending.

Hidden Among Days questions the role and place of the individual, what it means to 'belong' amidst revolving backdrops that move from room to room. Exemplifying an agent of being 'within and without', Masha Kovtun puts into painterly terms the experience of being an immigrant, of feeling both displaced and comfortable, of being somewhere and elsewhere at the same time. It is for this reason that a singular emotion, whether it be contentment or melancholy, stagnation or relief, cannot be attributed to her paintings. Their nuance lies in the holistic experience of being both lost and found, of searching after loss, and continuing on even when a door closes.